Akuyaku Tensei Dakedo Doushite Kou Natta.

(悪役転生だけどどうしてこうなった。)

Arc 01

Part 02

Sekimura Imuya
(関村イムヤ)

Story Description:

Eliza Kaldia, who reincarnated as a noble girl villainess in a fantasy otome game, was stuck in a world that seemed far from her image of how noble girls should be living, as the fated events of the game were still far off while she remained a child. In the first place, it was suspect if she could even live to make it to the school setting of the game. Due to changes in the situation of the neighboring country which never appeared in the original game, the world became nothing like the flowery school life from the game. It was a world where even young girls had to take up weapons. How did it turn out this way...

I don't have any cheat-like abilities. I can't use magic. My sense of ethics might have become a little twisted due to being reincarnated.

Original Story can be found here: Link

Chapter 19: The House Of Lords Is Like The Sea

Several chandeliers crafted of exquisite gold dangled from the ceiling of the great hall, even though it was crowded right now, looking at their luxuriousness, if there were fewer people here, this place would make a fine place for dancing.

The House of Lords is located in one of the royal palace's castles, the Arktoria Castle, and my mouth was wide agape at seeing how high the ceilings were. There were also stained glass windows with religious drawings and silver frames, giving various colors to the sunlight hitting the hall. This castle was only meant for national politics, and so because nobles are the ones who use this place the most, even the conference hall had such sparkling beauty and extravagance.

"Is it that unusual?"

"Well, a little."

Earl Terejia's voice from next to me brought me back to my senses. We're not here to take in the sights, and I hurriedly refocused myself.

"Marquis Rittergau has arrived. It will begin soon."

The earl pointed at the innermost desk. When I looked over there, besides Marquis Rittergau who was just about to sit down, there was also the commander-in-chief of the kingdom's armies, Marquis Rolentsor, the highest ranking noble, Archduke Dovadain, and various other high-ranking economic ministers and priests, all the prominent leading figures from the royal palace were there. Also among them were Margrave Genas, and the one in charge of Fort Jugfena, Earl Einsbark.

I'm not sure exactly just how nervous I was, but my palms were becoming damp with sweat. Even though I had known it could happen, I had always felt it was only a concept, only now was reality rapidly setting in. Even after living in this world for six years, I still hadn't gotten rid of my impression that "this is an otome game's world."

There was a quiet buzz around the hall before the meeting started. To me who was seated almost completely in Earl Terejia's shadow, as expected, many curious looks were cast my way, it seems that "a child being in the House of Lords" was quite the news. It was different from the clearly disrespectful looks I had gotten at my birthday celebration.

Finally the nobles quieted down, and the clanging sound of a bell was heard from the center. It was as if ocean waves had calmed down and become like a still pond. Maybe it's because most of the stained glass was blue, so that's why the sea was the first image I thought of. Maybe he's an official of some sort, a man rose up from the seats in the center and announced the beginning of today's meeting, and that there were two items on today's agenda.

"The first item, is with regards to refugees from the former Artolas Kingdom that are under temporary protection in the Jugfena royal domain, and what we should do with them. The second item, is going on military alert with regards to the conflict between the Shiru tribe and the Densel Dukedom's army. Senior Earl Einsbark, please let us know about the refugees currently under your protection."

"- At Fort Jugfena, there are approximately twelve hundred former residents of Artolas that are under our protection. We've loaned them tents to camp outside of Fort Jugfena with, and provided them with supplies from our stockpiles, but Fort Jugfena does not have enough food in reserve to keep this up for long. The number of people will probably keep increasing until autumn, and according to the refugees the women and children of the Shiru tribe are behind them and on their way. If another one thousand people arrive, our food stockpiles will be completely exhausted by the end of summer. We also don't have enough tents. It's already a situation where people are sleeping outside, exposed to the elements."

Earl Einsbark was a tall, stocky figure in the prime of life, and his deep voice resounded throughout the entire hall, such as even I who was sitting in the back could hear him clearly.

".....That many people? As expected, it would have been better to expel

them without offering our protection to begin with……"

Someone in the conference hall made the first comment. After that, a commotion began in the hall.

"No, they're also people that believe in the same religion as us. We can't just abandon them."

"Even so, that's back when we were the Ar Xia Holy Kingdom! Arxia is no longer a coalition of smaller countries united by the Xia sect!"

"When the Ar Xia church became the official state church, weren't there independent noble lords incorporated into our territory at the time as well?"

"That's all from more than fifty years ago."

"While that is indeed from more than fifty years ago, the Arxia Kingdom was established more than six hundred years ago, and we've never forsaken those that believe in the same religion as us."

"But, if we intervene in Densel's civil war, Rindarl will have a cause to go to war with us."

At once, debates flew around the conference hall as I listened, while Earl Terejia looked around, and shook his head at me. I understood it to mean that he was disappointed in the arguing nobles.

"It's a dispute between the border nobles and the inner area nobles, is it?"

"The inland nobles lack a sense of danger. However, with regards to Rindarl, it won't only be the borders that are in danger."

Indeed, it's mostly Jugfena and Genas that would be affected first if war was to break out with Rindarl, while their neighboring domains would hardly be affected. Of course, we'd also be in Jugfena and Genas's situation.

"The ones that are watching out for our eastern neighbor Rindarl are mostly the northern domain lords, eh."

The northern domain lords that I was referring to, were mostly the

domain lords with territories bordering the northern sea. The northern nobles had paler skin as their characteristic, and even the children there sing that you shouldn't provoke Rindarl.

"Without having to cross the Bandishia Plateau, it would be easier for Rindarl to face the less steep Amon Nor Mountains. With their troops already camped in Remeshu, they could cross the mountains by land and invade us by sea, pincering us. Although Densel isn't known for its ships, Parmigran is known to trade with its southern neighbors for ships."

"Does this mean that there's no way to guard against Rindarl?"

"Defense spending has only been there in name for many years now."

At the last piece of information that the earl had just mentioned, I nodded reflexively in understanding. With this, I finally understand the relations between the eastern Arxian nobles.

The lords of the smaller domains surrounding the royal capital, which I'll call the inland domains faction, have very little army strength, and they severely lack a sense of impending crisis. They were mostly former priest nobles that had their own small inner domains, since they have plenty of money, they believe that if we accept refugees all they have to do is help spend some money. They can't even imagine that the entire country would be embroiled in war because of helping people. Unlike the royal capital and the border domains that have more foreigners gather there, the inland domains are as if time has stopped and they've stagnated. Almost everyone among them were clamoring for accepting the refugees.

The border domains and the northern domains by the sea consider the influence of Rindarl uniting as their number one priority. Almost none of them agreed to accepting the refugees, if their own domains became a battleground, it would become necessary to invest all their surplus funds into land warfare or naval defense, they hoped that we could maintain a policy of non-intervention in the east. So of course, all of them would reject the refugees.

At the midst of this issue were the Jugfena royal domain, the Genas

domain, the border domains faction and the inland domains faction, but most were silent and waiting for the decision of the House of Lords. Of course the Kaldia domain was among those waiting. There were both merits and demerits to accepting the refugees, and since the House of Lords is the most critical location for making defense decisions, it's a rule here to not speak up irresponsibly.

The southern border domain lords have to maintain a different line of defense, so they're the ones impacted the least. Because of this, they seemed almost indifferent to this issue, and remained silent while seeming to admire the conference hall.

"In the first place, we're not in the era of fifty years ago. The refugees have no land or money, and they speak a different language. Even if we decide to take them in, which domain would accept them!"

One of the nobles got really heated up about the debate, and raised his voice in frustration. Everyone fell silent at his statement. Earl Terejia and I looked at each other, and he nodded quietly at me.

I held in my trembling the best I could, and took a deep breath.

"If it's decided that the refugees will be accepted, then my domain can take them in."

The voice I summoned wasn't quite that loud, but it resounded clearly throughout the conference hall that had just fallen silent.

Chapter 20: An Afternoon Of Being Drained By Fatigue

All eyes were suddenly focused on me. My heart was beating annoyingly fast to the point of being painful.

"……What's this?"

The first voice that spoke up was from Marquis Rittergau. He didn't hide the harsh tone of his voice. His attitude seemed so threatening, but I had to deal with my own fear.

"If it should be necessary, then my Kaldia domain can accept the refugees, as I just said."

I said it even more directly than earlier. After all, it would be Kaldia that's the most likely to be forced to accept them anyways. If I said that we'd accept them ahead of time, then I can get more favorable terms.

Marquis Rittergau didn't respond, and only looked at me in anticipation. I felt stifled by the pressure, and heavy silence fell again.

I counted to well above ten in my mind. During this entire time, Marquis Rittergau and I stared fixedly at each other. – And then, finally, the low whisper of the nobles stirred the air of the conference hall.

"- We should return to the main agenda now."

"Y, yes. Well then, Viscountess Kaldia has nominated herself as a candidate for accepting the refugees……"

With my speaking up at that timing, it seems to have beneficial for moving things along in the House of Lords. There had been almost no chance of any of the inland domains accepting the refugees, and I had put forth a practical proposal.

Although the northern nobles complained of concerns about Rindarl again, they were silenced by the priests talking about how the kingdom was founded with the precepts of accepting everyone in the Xia religious sects and the uproar it would cause if we didn't take in the refugees. In

the first place, the Densel Dukedom had already virtually been Arxia's enemy already, so going to war with them wouldn't be that big of a surprise to our kingdom.

The border domain lords had already started a little on making military preparations, and at this rate the southeastern domain lords will probably go on full military alert status and receive the others' cooperation.

"Well then, starting next month, the Artolas refugees shall be moved to Viscountess Kaldia's domain in groups of fifty. Food supplies shall be provided by the Henznaut domain as well as the various lords in the Greenfield region, Margrave Genas shall provide twenty tents, and any more necessary shall be loaned by the Freche domain, Ruktoferd domain, and the Royal Army. We'll be counting on everyone."

In the end, other than the northern domains, most of the closer domains agreed to give some kind of support for the refugees. On top of that, quite a large amount of funds would be provided for us from the national treasury as well as the church.

The southeastern nobles, mostly the inland nobles among them, since this would probably stimulate their own economies, had rather cheerful expressions, but in return the northern nobles who were outnumbered and had lost their cause were glaring at them resentfully. It'll be better if this wound isn't too deep and we can all cooperate later, is what I hoped.

"Did the House of Lords meeting go well, Riliza-dono?"

"It's Eliza, Claudia-dono....."

Even though I was so exhausted after returning from the House of Lords, the first voice that greeted me upon returning was so carefree, someone with an unbelievable energetic voice. Outside the door of Earl Terejia's accommodations in the royal capital, this girl was spinning a spear about cheerfully. She was a real beauty, and her long golden hair was sparkling in the sunlight.

Even though I've corrected her so many times, she would always get my name wrong no matter how many times we spoke. At seeing the dazzling smile across her face, I felt as if it was adding insult to injury for my tired

body and mind.

"Oh, I do apologize. It's just, I'm really bad with people's names....."

"Yes, I know that very well."

"Oh, okay. But anyways, did things go well at the House of Lords?"

Oh, okay, her answers were so casual, she seemed to always have no worries whatsoever. It's piling up even more on me! It's certain that her energeticness has caused my spirit to suffer even more damage in hit points.

This girl's name is Claudia Rolentsor, she's from that prestigious military family. She's the other companion that's staying in Kaldia with me alongside Elise Sherstok.

Probably due to how she was raised, she's been trained fully to become a knight and is doing it for real despite the rarity of it for women, while it had been rather difficult for me. Honestly speaking, it had been really tiring. By the way, this girl believes in doing everything fairly with the ideals of justice, believes in absolute integrity, and if it wasn't for how annoying her personality was, I could say that she's actually a really good person.

"Even though they don't speak our language, you're willing to accept them into your domain, I truly admire Eliza-dono's dauntlessness. Giving a helping hand to the weak without any pretension, such a wonderful just cause!"

"Um, rather than that, Claudia-dono, why would you happen to be here?"

Claudia welcomed me with an expression saying as if she belonged here, but when we had left the Kaldia domain two days ago, she should have remained back at the mansion. It takes two days for a horse-drawn carriage to get here, so why is she here?

"It's because Elise-dono wrote a letter to you. I rode all the way here to deliver it to you."

As Claudia absentmindedly made that statement, I felt the pain in my head increasing. What does it mean that she rode all the way here, a distance that takes a horse-drawn carriage two full days. I don't understand her. Even including my previous life, it's my first time dealing with someone that's so difficult to comprehend. I have no idea on how to handle her.

"Well then, Eliza-dono, you're probably tired from constantly sitting down in the horse-drawn carriage and at the House of Lords. I'll loan you a spear, how about we loosen up your body with some spear practice?"

It seems that she was concerned for me, but what's with her proposal, I have no intention of exhausting myself into an early grave. As Claudia followed me to the garden in high spirits, no, uhh, she didn't seem to hear my rejections.

As a last resort, I looked at Earl Terejia to ask him for help, but he was just as tired as I was, and he only nodded as if to say to do my best.

……There's no helping it. I'll just have to play along with Claudia for a little bit.

Earl Terejia's garden here was covered with stone pavement rather than grass. That Claudia found her way here, I wonder if that means she also knew the earl from before. Because the ground is made of stone, don't swing your spear with full force here at me! But for some reason, when I said that to her, she smiled so happily, and nodded ambiguously at me.

"Eluza-dono is six years old now. I'm ten years older than you! I've just started learning the spear recently, so I hope to live up to Terejia ojii-san's and your expectations."

"I'm not Eluza, it's Eliza. I've heard that the Rolentsor family starts teaching the sword at the age of three, so why is that you're only learning the spear now?"

I wonder if something is fun about all this, Claudia's smile didn't slip at all, as she wound cloth strips around her hands. Since she has a custom-made spear for her, and there's no leather binding on her spear handle, it seems that she has to do this in order to prevent her hands from slipping.

“No, me and my older brothers started learning the sword at the age of two. I only started learning the spear after I turned seven.”

She started learning the sword at the age of two, this answer made my cheeks twitch involuntarily. As expected of the Rolentsor noble family skilled in martial and military matters.

I warmed up for a few minutes according to Claudia’s instructions, maybe it was actually good for refreshing my body, my body definitely felt a bit lighter. I’ve been so busy lately, so I haven’t had much time to practice the spear, so this might actually be good.

But anyways, Claudia appears to be even more skilled with the spear than I expected. This is the first time I’ve actually practiced the spear together with her, although I had heard about her prowess from the soldiers after she came to the mansion, her family has really knightly behavior and that they’re skilled in all sorts of martial arts is what I had figured. However, her skills with a spear, no matter how I look at it, seem to exceed even my teacher Gunther’s level.

“How are they, my spear skills?”

“They seem to be better than my teacher’s.”

“Gunther, eh. Maybe my family’s style is just too strong. If it’s alright with Eliza-dono, we can fight together!”

While cleaning up after, Claudia still showed no signs of fatigue and was laughing happily. As expected, she’s an incomprehensible person. Whether it’s spear practice, or letting her stay in the mansion with me, I couldn’t refuse her either. Well, she nodded, and suddenly changed her expression.

“I was wondering what to do if you had refused me. Since Terejia ojii-san had requested that I practice the spear with Eliza-dono, I’ve been trying my best on fulfilling my promise!”

Could it be, could it really be that he had been the cause of my spear practice just now. I was dumbfounded by Claudia’s completely unexpected remark, and this time I completely lost all of my energy.

Chapter 21: Elise's Letter

"Eh, we're staying here in the royal capital until tomorrow?"

"Yes. Tomorrow, I'm to attend a tea party and meet some nobles to make connections. After all, we couldn't even greet anyone at the House of Lords."

"So that's it. Then, I'll wait for you guys here tomorrow."

"No, you're attending as well. You'll be accompanying me as my retainer, is what the earl said."

We were staying at the earl's place, and we just finished a luxurious dinner served for the master of the house that had just returned after a long absence. Since Kamil didn't have noble status himself, he hadn't attended the meeting at the House of Lords earlier, and I had just informed him of our change in plans for tomorrow.

The two of us had remained in the dining hall after dinner to talk, while drinking the tea that the maids had brewed for me. With the influx of refugees and the incident of Viscount Galbaito's death, there were so many things that had to be done, I finally felt like I could relax a little bit for now.

"So, this means that the earl is seriously trying to make me into Charlie's retainer, right?"

"What are you saying, at this late hour. It was probably decided from the time that you accompanied me at my birthday celebration."

Kamil tilted his head slightly as if he had just realized it, but I was shocked at how late he seems to have recognized it himself. My birthday celebration wasn't about unveiling me only, but also showing who was going to become my vassal in the future.

"—. Mmm..... that's so. Sorry, it's nothing."

Kamil slowly shook his head. It was as if he was trying to rid himself of his thoughts. "I'm sorry to have said something strange," said Kamil as he smiled, it felt like there was a mix of feelings, and for some reason my

voice got stuck in my throat.

"Kamil -"

"Excuse me! Eija-dono, I've brought your letter!"

The words that I was about to say were interrupted by a certain someone rudely rushing into the dining hall without even knocking. Even though it's after eating, Claudia was like a typhoon and showed no decrease in her energy level at all, and she had charged straight into the dining hall. And what's more, this time, she's gotten my name completely off the mark.

"C, Claudia-dono?"

"I'm so sorry! Elise-dono's letter that she entrusted me with, I forgot about it until now!"

She headed straight for me and held out an envelope right in front of my face, and she rushed so fast that she ran right into the chair's backrest. It's good that there had been a cushion, but if this had been a normal chair, it surely would have left quite a bump.

"T, thanks....."

"No, no, I'm being taken care of by you now, so something like this is nothing to me!"

You're declaring that this is nothing, but no matter how I look at it, it's impossible for covering two days worth of distance on horseback by yourself all in order to deliver a letter to be considered "no big deal." As expected, I don't understand this girl.

As I received the letter, I could clearly feel my cheek twitching again. - At that moment, I suddenly recalled a phrase from my previous life. That's right, her sort of action is known as "ruining the mood."

Kamil next to me had fallen into stunned silence at the sudden intruder. Oh yeah, come to think of it Kamil hasn't talked much with Claudia before, and he probably didn't even know that she was already here today. Uwaa..... I had no room in my heart for squealing like that.

“You’re having tea together after dinner? Can I join in?”

Why does her expression seem so excited and sparkling at a few mere teacups on the table, I wonder. Just as I was about to sigh and say something, Claudia already flew off somewhere.

“I still haven’t even said anything yet……”

“……Eh, wasn’t that Claudia-sama? Why was she here? Come to think of it, how did she get here?”

Kamil seems to have finally accepted the situation in front of him for reality, and finally spoke up in a rather confused voice. That’s…… before I had time to explain the situation to him, Claudia returned here from the hallway. She had a mountain of sweets in her right arm, while her left hand was dragging along a maid with a teacup and saucer.

In the end, we were forced to accompany Claudia, and drank tea until it was so late at night that we were reprimanded by the maids. Such a small child is still up at this time! is what the old maid said as she pointed at me glared at Claudia, maybe she knew Claudia from before as well, there was no mercy in her lecture. As expected, even Claudia slunk out of the room as if she had wilted, and I took my letter as Kamil and I returned to our rooms.

It’s now late at night, but there’s still things I want to do before I sleep. I sat at the writing desk with a piece of paper, and opened an ink bottle in order to begin writing a reply.

“Ah……”

Unluckily, there had been cracks in the film sealing the ink bottle, and the ink spilled. It got all over my right hand, the desk, and partially on the paper I had just brought out. I sighed as I wiped myself and the desk with a cloth. I couldn’t get the ink out of the paper, oh well, paper is used for writing on anyways.

And so I finally began to read Elise’s letter, her handwriting was quite slender, I felt like I could tell how weak she was even through the way she used a pen.

After beginning with a standard greeting that conformed to noble etiquette, she began talking about how she's began walking around outside, what she's seen, about herself, and her interactions with the people in the mansion. It was very Elise-like, nothing but gentle scenes with a peaceful heart.

As I continued reading the letter, the topic changed to worry about me and how busy I've been the past few days.

Unlike Claudia who moved about freely outside the mansion, the last time I had seen the sickly Elise had been on the day I received the news about the refugees. It's only natural for her to be worried.

It's not really that good for a girl who's supposed to have come here for recuperation to be worrying about me. Even a little bit of stress can cause her illness to become worse.

I wrote an appropriate reply, and just in case I missed something, I checked over Elise's letter again. There seems to have been a postscript written casually on the back of the letter, so I scanned its contents.

P.S. I would like to meet Eliza-sama's distant relative, Elise-sama. I heard from Bellway-sama that she also has a weak body like me. Since she's also named Elise and is sickly as well, I'm really curious……

Just what exactly is that Bellway doing.

I entrusted him with the care of the child locked up in the innermost part of the mansion, but I didn't expect that he would make the mistake of allowing the person with the name she's borrowed, Elise, to find out about her.

Of course there had been a reason for me to go to the trouble of allowing guests, and then giving the same name to that child. It's in order to not give accurate information about the mansion to the outside.

Because she had a weak body, the original Elise would be limited from meeting people, and the child that was nominally sick and had the same name was also limited in the contact allowed to her. It's because I want to limit the knowledge of that child's existence as much as possible.

With two sickly Elises in the mansion at the same time, if information ever leaks outside, it could be confusing to others. If it's an ambiguous story, the information about the Elise that's been entrusted to me will be mixed with that child's information. That's what I'm aiming for.

Of course, there was no way I could let the original Elise know about it herself. But, it seems that the other "Elise's" existence has already been exposed to her. This won't be easy to hide anymore.

……Elise and Maya, will be returning to the Sherstok domain after at most three years. During this time, as long as Elise remains in my demesne, and doesn't leave the mansion, hopefully it won't be a big problem.

While praying that more information about that child wouldn't become more widespread, I ignored Elise's postscript. Since it had been written all the way on the back, a reply wasn't expected.

Chapter 22: Earl Terejia's Social Circle

The sunlight was streaming down at the end of spring, on a neatly arranged assortment of sweets on the garden table, but I only listened to the female noble in front of me while occasionally responding to her.

Sitting across from me, chattering away for the last hour was Senior Viscountess Daniela Felhi-Berendorf, aunt to Senior Baron Felhi, a financial minister of the palace, and she was a domain lord from the Artsbelf region northwest of the royal palace.

"Anyways, that knight really couldn't read the mood! Choosing something like earrings to give a woman, he really lacks consideration!"

Since Earl Terejia was currently boating on the pond with the other male nobles, and other than the servants, only this woman was left with me, but her topics weren't really something that would be meant for a six year old. I wonder if she's actually saying all this to Kamil standing behind me who was being so still all this time like a statue.

At nineteen years old, she was actually younger than her nephew Baron Felhi, she had gotten married at sixteen and became a widow last year when her husband passed away, and she was only interested in the romance gossip between men and women at the royal palace.

Since her husband had passed away, she inherited his position and became the Viscountess of a small domain near the royal capital, but she left its management almost entirely up to her head steward, and it seems that she lives here in the royal capital instead.

Having her dumped on me as my conversation partner without taking into consideration the difference between our ages, of course this had to be an episode from my entrance into the florid noble society. She started from which young noblemen were nice and handsome, and continued with who seemed to getting along with each other and who danced with who. And currently, she's getting heated up after she reached the topic of recalling about various unfortunate men.

"Ahh..... Is it that bad to give women earrings as a present?"

“It’s common sense for western nobles. Earrings should given from a woman to the man they love. For men, they usually only gift them to other men as a sign of true friendship.”

“I understand, so that’s how it was.”

What’s with this custom. A man giving another man an accessory as a sign of true friendship, seems like such a mysterious custom to me, so I replied reflexively with a perfunctory answer.

“It’s a venerable tradition. In the ancient story about Ugaria’s knights, two men who shared an earring each would protect each other’s backs on the battlefield.”

What’s with this, I wonder if this was a roundabout way of expressing homosexuality back in the day for them?

Two men sending accessories to each other, no matter how I look at it, I can’t see it as simply declaring true friendship to each other. When I nonchalantly checked Kamil’s expression as he stood behind me, he seemed slightly uncomfortable, and he didn’t really seem convinced either. It seems that my sense was most likely accurate.

However, if there really are records of the country that came before the Holy Ar Xia Kingdom, Ugaria, then it does make sense that such a custom is present in western Arxia.

Western Arxia has a strong sense for preserving traditions and customs from the Ugarian era. Since the Jugfena region has its own customs left by ancient times, probably the entirety of Arxia is like that as well.

“That’s why, for a man to give a woman earrings as a present, is like declaring he doesn’t see her as a woman. If only he had ever been to the royal capital, of course he should have known!”

As Viscountess Berendorf got even more heated up while remembering that man, I just replied is that so, and pretended to be taking her seriously. Right now, Earl Terejia is probably speaking to her nephew Baron Felhi about the main issue, and I was only speaking with her just in case.

When the nobles returned from their boating trip, today's tea party changed locations to a different house for dinner.

Today's goal was to get as much financial assistance from the kingdom as possible from the financial minister Baron Felhi and his noble colleagues, and since the earl had already contacted them about the issue via pigeon before, today we're here to greet them as a matter of courtesy.

In fact, it seems that we're staying here for an extra day in the royal capital specially so that I can make some connections with the nobles in the royal capital. Since we had accounted for an extra day's time while visiting the royal capital, this is no problem.

"What happened?"

"There's no problem. Originally, I had loaned money to their fathers several times before as well."

Earl Teresia unceremoniously returned with a nonchalant tone of voice. This earl, he didn't simply have connections, he used debts from their parents' generation to choose collaborators to work with this time, eh. Even I felt slightly chilly at his outstanding competence and abilities.

For something he did a generation ago to still have such a large impact, noble society must be indeed completely interconnected. When I thought about how he managed to increase the budget for financial support from the kingdom for the refugees to 1.5 times its original amount, I carved how important these types of things were into my memory.

The tea party during the day had been at Viscount Avon's older sister's house, and when we hurriedly joined the private dinner at Earl Trada's house, we received a rather strange level of welcome for just Earl Terejia.

Well, after all, Earl Terejia is the younger brother of Marquis Rittergau, who is the prime minister as well as the Terejia family head. While he's in the countryside now, there's still probably many people that want a good relation with him simply because of who his older brother is.

As if to prove me right, Earl Terejia was immediately surrounded by people, while Kamil and I went around greeting the important nobles

courteously, then Claudia joined us for some reason, and the three of us quietly had some food in a corner of this venue.

"W, why isn't Charlie wearing a dress and you're in knight attire instead?"

"There's no time or money to get a complete set of dresses or accessories. Besides, in the House of Lords it's been determined that the proper wear for minors should be knight attire."

As we enjoyed the beef braised in red wine, I answered Kamil who seemed to be smirking for some reason with today's excuse.

In Arxia, males have priority for succession to the peerage, so there wasn't even a precedent where an underage girl has succeeded to the peerage before. Normally there would be more relatives. In my case, since my father had done his best to eradicate all his own relatives apart from his children, I was in the unusual situation of ending up being the only person with inheritance rights. Come to think of it, although he's my father, that person might end up in the history books as one of the most evil villains ever.

So because of that, birthday celebrations for nobles with peerage had only rules for boys, and their formal wear was supposed to be knight attire for the same reason. And since I feel that wearing dresses is troublesome, it's actually something I welcome.

"How nice, Elise-dono. I'd also like to be in knight attire rather than my dress."

"My name's not Elise, it's Eliza."

This time Claudia had mixed up my name with Elise's, and she was wearing a sky blue dress. She's tall and slender with a nice figure, she's quite an eye-catching beauty. Since she usually liked to dress in men's shirts and shorts to move about easier, today's was a rare appearance for her. However, just like usual she had a mountain of food on her plates, and there was nothing ladylike about her.

And so, we spent some time chatting and having light-hearted fun, but

Kamil who had been laughing suddenly fixed his line of sight on someone.

“……Ah, he saw us, Charlie. Over there.”

“Hm?”

I looked over at the direction he indicated. Someone unexpected was standing there, what’s this, I turned around reflexively, he noticed me looking at him as well, and he smiled mysteriously just like before.

It was Margrave Molton.

His beautiful silver hair was shining brilliantly under the light of the chandelier.

Chapter 23: The Children Loving Margrave

Just as I was beginning to get tired of the overly luxurious food at the dinner party and was getting a little drowsy, the nobles from farther away began leaving as well. While waiting for Earl Terejia who was still surrounded by nobles, Kamil, Claudia, and I remained in the corner and poked at what remained of the food. Although we had free time, we weren't bored. There were so many nobles here that I've never met before. While observing their elegance, I learned who each of them were, as this was absolutely necessary in order for me to seriously enter their society later in the future.

And so while I was quietly sipping my tea, Kamil suddenly froze up.

"What's the matter?"

"Margrave Molton is coming over this way."

He said so in almost a whisper as he kept his line of sight fixed on the margrave, and indeed Margrave Molton who had just been talking calmly with the other nobles from the royal capital was now walking leisurely in this direction. He was also looking at us, and our eyes met as if he had nothing to hide.

As expected, he was smiling without seeming to have any bad intentions. Without any hesitation, he came to our location, and he encouraged the shorter man following behind him to step in front.

I remembered the face of this man who seemed slightly troubled. He was introduced to me at my birthday party by Earl Terejia as a senior viscount who was a secretary at the royal palace.

"How do you do, Viscountess Kaldia?"

"Greetings and how do you do, Viscount Gribell. Thank you very much for having taken the trouble to attend my birthday celebration."

"No, it was my pleasure."

As he nodded, the viscount's expression seemed like he was seeing something strange. I wonder if it's because I'm not talking like a child.

Since it's been so long since I was actually a child, even though I have some idea of what it's like, it's difficult for me to act like one. Because it's easier than having to pretend, I've become like this now.

However, because of this, the viscount now seems to be considering how to speak to me. It would be rude if he was too direct with what he really wanted without at least making some conversation first. As a result, he missed the timing for his next sentence and silence had fallen upon the conversation for a bit.

".....At my birthday celebration, thank you very much for the grape juice. I'll have to hold off on trying the wine until I become an adult."

"Ah, it's fine. I'm glad that you were able to enjoy it."

I managed to remember back to my birthday celebration in order to continue the conversation. Viscount Gribell had given me a set of both grape juice and red wine, since many other nobles had simply given alcohol, his consideration for me still being a minor had left an impression.

Viscount Gribell had such a relieved expression when I continued the conversation. He glanced at Margrave Molton who was now behind him, then spoke up again.

"Since it was from the Freche region, I felt that you'd enjoy it. My younger brother is currently serving Earl Garlof as a squire."

"When you say Earl Garlof....."

"Junior Earl Robert Garlof is Margrave Freche's younger brother. When my older brother was in school, he got to know Margrave Freche, which is why my younger brother got to serve Earl Garlof as an apprentice page, and now he's become a squire."

"I see, how fortunate for him."

"Yes, yes. School is the perfect place for fated meetings. After all, studying together for three years, can cultivate deeper relationships. ..... Ah, come to think of it. Viscountess Kaldia, I'd like to introduce my friend from school to you."

He's finally gotten to the point, as I sighed mentally at how roundabout the conversation was, by all means, I consented. It feels like meaningless chatter accounts for eighty percent of talking between nobles. I haven't really interacted with many nobles other than Earl Terejia, so I'm unused to this kind of interaction.

"This is my friend from school, Margrave Molton."

Viscount Gribell stepped to the side to make way for the man with him. The man bowed, and lightly shook his silver hair. As I saw his face from up close, I felt like he was really quite the handsome young man.

"Pleased to meet you, Margrave Molton. I would like to give thanks to the gods that I was able to meet you here today. I apologize for my rudeness in not greeting you the other day."

"All good, Viscountess Kaldia. It is I who should have apologized for not greeting you despite it being a celebration for you. I should be the one thanking the gods."

I didn't expect the major noble from the northwest, Margrave Molton to approach me so directly, and while I pretended to remain calm, I was actually in turmoil inside.

It wouldn't hurt to stay slightly longer in the royal capital to make some connections, but even though he had accepted the invitation to my birthday celebration, why is he only greeting me here at this late hour.

Unluckily, right now Earl Terejia is quite far away and busy accompanying the other nobles. It couldn't be, was he aiming for when the earl would be too busy to pay attention to me? I wondered what Margrave Molton wanted from me as he smiled gently, I wasn't able to read his intentions. I was nervous to the point where I was about to break out into a cold sweat.

"You don't have to be so stiff around me. I have a son the same age as you. As a parent, I just wanted to talk to someone who was the same age as my son."

Margrave Molton's cheerful statement exceeded my comprehension

capacity as I was being too vigilant and nervous.

.....Son!?

I had been so high-strung that I broke myself.

As Margrave Molton began talking about his son being the same age as me and being the right age for a playmate, and asked what kinds of things I was learning, I could only feel like as if it were an out of body experience, as I had lost all my energy due to my own feelings of how stupid I'd been.

The reason for his mysterious smiles seems to have been because it was his way of encouraging children to work hard. That's what I had detected at my birthday celebration. But it was natural I'd misunderstand since I hadn't seen such an expression until today.

In the end, it seems that Margrave Molton has a soft spot for children and he's taken a liking to me. Since he's come to the royal capital to do business with the merchants here and sell daily necessities, I got a promise from him to sell those to us cheaply.

And since we needed to make many bulk purchases to help the refugees set up the foundations for what they would need to live in my domain, there's no reason to turn down an offer to be able to buy things cheaply. When Earl Terejia was finally free from all those nobles, he seemed very pleased as well, so it seems that I didn't do something unnecessary.

"Come to think of it, even if Kamil didn't say anything, Claudia-dono kept quiet as well."

Claudia's father has quite a low social status among the prestigious Rolentsor family. Even prestigious families will have nobles without peerage due to having too many people. For those like Claudia that won't succeed to the peerage, nobles without their own lands often have to find governmental work. Due to the family's status and influence in the military, it's relatively easy for Rolentsor to find work for the Royal Army. Compared to me, Claudia's social status is actually much lower than mine, but even so it could be useful to keep a connection to the Rolentsor family.

“That’s because! I’m aiming to become a knight, so it’s different from you guys. Father told me that once I’m twenty, I’m free to enter the knights and do whatever I like, but since I have to do it with loans and I’m already mostly cut off from my relatives, it’ll actually be more like from when I’m thirteen. Shouldn’t you know this already?”

Urgh, although Claudia was proudly puffing out her chest, I had to conceal how much her story actually troubled me. Looking at the current situation, there would probably not be much of a bright future waiting for Claudia by the time she turns twenty. Judging by both her age and personality, I don’t think she’ll be easy to marry off, either. However, for Earl Terejia to have gone to the trouble of bringing her here, with how strong her spear skills are, and the fact that she’s still a Rolentsor, I feel like maybe she can actually make it as a knight before she turns twenty.

“……Arxia has never had a female knight up until now.”

As if to answer the question in my mind, Earl Terejia secretly whispered that to me. I see, then she has quite a difficult path ahead of her. In that case, then the earl’s aim can only be one thing. Claudia will enter the knights, so that she doesn’t become a burden forever on this household.

Chapter 24: Won't Tomorrow Come Quicker?

With so much going on, there was no time to leisurely take two days returning by horse-drawn carriage. Socializing should be something fun and relaxing? Socializing isn't something so simple for nobles. While riding horses for the entire day and switching them once in a town on our way, I arrived back in the Kaldia domain on the same night in a terribly exhausted state.

Of course, as a child I didn't have the strength to control my horse for an entire day, so Kamil and Claudia had taken turns riding with me.

"What happened while we were gone?"

On behalf of Earl Terejia, his secretary Bellway had been in charge during our absence. Even after returning there was no time to rest our weary bodies, we had to immediately make large scale preparations for receiving the refugees we agreed to accept, although the earl was the one with the real power, and he immediately headed for the domain lord's office. Claudia headed for the training grounds, I wonder how it's possible for her to have all that excess energy……

Bellway reported that everything was the same and not much happened, and that there has been no particularly noticeable change for Elise and Maya who have moved in recently, or for the new nanny that's now mostly in charge of taking care of Elise.

"Then, about the matter of the 'ojou-sama……'"

Bellway gingerly began his report about why Elise had found out and written me that postscript. Bellway and the servants call that child "ojou-sama" so that it's easier to differentiate.

"My deepest apologies. The other day, when I went out, Elise-sama slipped out for a little bit."

"I know. Elise wrote about that in her letter. Well, I have an affinity for deceiving people. From now on, if Elise ever asks about that child, send

her to me. I'll trick her well."

As I expected, the main issue was about that child. For information control on the child in the future, I have to be able to control the earl's secretary Bellway. Since this mansion has relatively few people in it and he's the one in charge of keeping track of everything, letting Elise find out about her, this is clearly his fault. It's a mistake that's rare of him.

As I instructed him about future correspondence, and was about to ask him if there was anything else to report, Bellway suddenly lowered his head deeply for some reason.

"I'm truly, deeply sorry about all this. To have betrayed Eliza-sama's trust..... No matter how you punish me, I'm prepared for it."

There was so much passion for his work in his voice. .....As I looked at him bowing his head towards me, I felt it must be hard as well to be the earl's secretary, and felt something like pity for him.

Since Earl Terejia doesn't like having more staff than necessary, Bellway actually does more than just secretarial work without complaint. He was often asked to deal with troublesome work, and he's even lowering his head to a child that's not even half his size, it must be quite the stressful job.

Taking this into consideration, there's quite a lot of emotional distance between me and Bellway. It's also quite surreal to be looking up at someone bowing their head to me.

".....The one putting trust in you, isn't me but Earl Terejia. There won't be any punishment from me."

Asking Bellway to take care of that child while we were gone, was because nobody else in the mansion had been qualified to take charge, and also because he's already received instructions from the earl on the matter. Although I had indeed been the one to request Bellway on this matter directly, but that's only because I'm the one taking responsibility for the care of that child. Saying something like he betrayed my expectations, but I had never really relied on him that much in the first place.

As Bellway was lost for words, I confirmed the contents of his report. As if he was protesting my decision to not punish him, Bellway had an expression that almost seemed sad, quite different from his usual steely mask.

Eastern Kaldia is still quite undeveloped, with a large unpopulated lake area. I plan to have the accepted refugees live there.

They're farmers, just like the people in my domain. Since there is no already established farmland to grant them, as newcomers they'll have to do irrigation work for their own land. With effort that environment should be inhabitable for people, and it'll be good for the domain as well since we lack fishermen, and setting the long-term goal as learning how to cultivate rice from other water-rich domains should be attainable as well. This project might continue on until the next generation, but even so Kaldia will be accepting the refugees because I can see future returns.

The most obvious benefit would be the pumpkin. Among the refugees, they have pumpkin seeds with them for negotiating new land to live on. Because I'm worried about changing the ecosystem, I've put a limit on the types of new crops that the refugees will be allowed to cultivate, for now I'll just use the pumpkins as a new crop type that the refugees brought with them.

I was planning to use their potatoes as well, but it seems that because Kaldia has soil with high water content, that it's not suitable for potatoes. What I remember from my previous life, is that pumpkins seem to be rather nutritious and would make a good crop. Since my domain only plants grain crops, hopefully adding pumpkin crops will help the people's overall nutrition.

Also, another great benefit would be expanding the labor force. Since people hardly ever move to the Kaldia domain from other domains, it's hard for us to start big projects due to a lack of labor force. Because the citizens of my domain have their hands full with planting the crops they need to survive, this domain has basically stagnated.

So even though I wanted to do something about the eastern lake areas

of my domain, there hasn't been any progress for several years. It's because I've had to wait for a surplus in the labor force as everyone is currently busy with maintaining their fields.

In that case, since receiving the refugees would mean having a large number of new citizens, I can think of them as a surplus labor force.

There won't be any disputes with my original citizens since they'll be living at different locations, and since they speak different languages anyways it'll be difficult for any types of disputes to arise. Since they can't communicate, they probably won't have anything to fight over.

But, their children's generation will definitely have to learn the Arxian language. I already talked to Earl Terejia about it, that we'll be needing to teach those that are currently too young to join in the irrigation project. Also in order to incorporate the technique to raise rice as well, their children and grandchildren will absolutely have to speak the Arxian language so that everyone can be unified.

After all, they can't keep being referred to as refugees forever. After we accept them, their new identity shall be citizens of the Kaldia domain. We should start calling them the new citizens, I'll talk with the earl about that tomorrow.

As I thought carefully over accepting the refugees, I was interrupted.

"You happen to still be awake?"

"……Mrs. Hortensia."

The woman who opened the door and entered seemed slightly surprised.

In place of Mrs. Galton who was fired, she's the new nanny, Mrs. Hortensia. There was no light illuminating the darkness, and I could only hear her sound.

"It won't be good for your body to stay up much longer."

"I understand. I'll go to sleep."

"That's good, then. You sometimes forget that you're still only six years old."

I was a bit startled at Mrs. Hortensia's remark. It's because she was right on the mark.

"Even if you've matured early, your body hasn't kept up with you. You should eat well, sleep well, and exercise well, so that your body doesn't become weak."

I understand, was my reply, and Mrs. Hortensia left the room after saying what she wanted to say.

Mrs. Hortensia isn't as annoying as Mrs. Galton was, but it's difficult to grasp her personality, and that was my assessment of the new nanny that's come here to the mansion.

Chapter 25: Kamil Novak

I woke up even though it was still dark outside.

It wasn't cold to the point where it woke me up, but it was chilly enough to chase away any drowsiness. Since I don't like laying around in bed when I'm wide awake, I grudgingly got out from under my warm covers.

When I looked at the water clock in my room, it was much earlier than I normally would get up. Since I hate the idea of catching a cold, I immediately put on my dalmatic.

Since I hate having nothing to do, I decided to take a walk in the mansion.

There should be no problem as long as I return before Mrs. Hortensia wakes up, I thought the same thing as before like on a certain morning so long ago.

Rashiok who was sleeping beside the water clock raised his head. Growl~~, a whining sound came from his throat that indicated he wanted to be spoiled, and I took him with me on the condition that he promised to be quiet.

Since the curtains haven't been opened yet, the hallways were just as dark as my room. Since Rashiok has night vision and acted almost like a guide dog, helping me avoid obstacles, bringing him along was quite useful.

As a domain lord's residence, the Mansion of Golden Hills is considered quite small, so there's not actually that many rooms. Since the barracks next door is actually larger, it makes one wonder which should actually be the domain lord's residence. In order to manage the people in the eastern part of my domain, calmly taking things into consideration it might be best to build a new small city in the center of the domain, as I currently live in the western part of Kaldia.

If war with Rindarl becomes actuality, we'd have to build a new military facility anyways. If results can be shown from us training cavalry troops,

the House of Lords will surely support us and further strengthen our army.

I kept my right hand on Rashiok's belly as he trotted along, and I wondered if I actually knew where I was going, when Rashiok suddenly snorted. And then, as if he was troubled by something, he rubbed his nose against my face, and pushed against my back.

By now Rashiok has matured, and he's at the size where his mouth can easily chomp off my head with a single bite. I can really feel how big he's getting, and when he stopped to look at me I gave him a gentle glance.

I saw someone's shadow, and I immediately hid in Rashiok's own shadow. Since Rashiok is taller than I am, it was simple to hide completely in his shadow.

"……Hm, is that Rashiok?"

The person walking down the hallway seems to have noticed Rashiok in the dimness. Rashiok growled softly in reply, and the person went into a room without paying mind to Rashiok. The voice was Bellway's. After thinking about it for a bit, I finally realized that we're close to Earl Terejia's room.

But, isn't it still a bit early for the earl to be up? I had my doubts, and decided to remain here for a bit. After doing it once before, I've acquired quite the bad hobby of enjoying eavesdropping.

From the earl's room, I eventually heard the two of them talking in subdued voices. They talked about the plans for today, and the reports on the pigeons that arrived last night. Getting up this early, must be due to the dedication they're putting in about the matter of accepting the refugees.

I didn't know about such a thing, because I'm still getting up at the same time as usual. Even normally, Earl Terejia overworks himself for his old age, and now he's adding even more to his burden. I can only pray that he doesn't collapse from overwork.

I thought I understood Earl Terejia's reason for rising early, and was

about to return to my room.

"Alright, so about Eliza-sama yesterday……"

Bellway mentioned my name, and I raised my hand to signal Rashiok to stop. I felt like he was going to report on my conversation with him yesterday, and I was interested in how he would talk about me with the earl.

Bellway's voice became even more hushed, he seemed to be whispering yesterday's conversation to the earl. His voice was so low that it was difficult to hear him clearly.

"……I don't trust the future master."

Bellway's voice seemed agitated as he returned to a normal speaking volume, and I could hear him clearly. The future master would of course be referring to me. I wonder if the earl intends to have his servants work for me in the future.

Out of all the servants in the mansion, only Bellway was from noble society. Bellway's father had been a titled knight, but since a titled knight was only an honorary position, it's not something that can obtain peerage. Unlike nobles that can retain their nobility throughout the generations despite not having peerage, there's a law that states once a titled knight dies, all their children will no longer be considered to have a noble's rights.

With people like this, if I lose Earl Terejia's protection, I might suddenly find myself without any retainers.

"You're not the only one."

Earl Terejia replied in a low voice that was like a sigh. It felt as if it sounded bitter.

"She doesn't trust me at all. She's been using Kamil and the soldiers and maids to collect information on the villagers."

……As expected, that was exposed. As the years passed and the number of people around me increased, for me to go and gather information

without using any of them, that does indeed seem like evidence that I don't trust the earl.

Earl Terejia and I have a relationship of mutual benefit where we use each other rather than a trusting relationship.

That's why he had been in charge of rebuilding my domain, and why he had participated in the early stages of the refugee acceptance plan as well. He's also using this as a chance to get rid of his own subordinates that are too troublesome to use and passing them along to me. What's more, all the grain that the Kaldia domain produces, goes through the Terejia family, and is sold by merchants affiliated with the Terejias. This could be said that it's an excellent monopoly deal for him. It's basically like I'm loaning the domain to him until I become of age since he's a noble without lands of his own. There were plenty of advantages to be had from this relationship for both of us.

Since all the servants in the mansion were hired by and signed contracts with Earl Terejia, isn't this evidence that he doesn't need to build a trusting relationship with me. For future things, he won't necessarily need me to do anything or require my trust to do what he wants.

Something like my trust, I wonder just how much it's worth. As I was furrowing my brows, Earl Terejia and Bellway's conversation continued.

"Then, Kamil also doesn't trust her?"

……Kamil, huh. I slightly ground my teeth.

He was originally a soldier in training from the army, and he used to have a life as a merchant's son. I'd heard that his father died, but if things were so simple he should have inherited his father's riches. While he was a soldier in training, he was selected to assist me, and just like that he's always stayed by my side, but I don't know the true reasons for it.

What will they talk about, I concentrated even more on this topic. I'd definitely like to clear up some unknown factors.

As I listened, the earl's next words were over in an instant.

“Ahh, that might be. If he knew that his father had been the merchant that poisoned the family he’s now serving, he might not be able to leave things as is.”

The merchant that had taken the blame for poisoning my father had been Kamil’s father.

I immediately paled, and my head was spinning around. My vision was flickering, and I collapsed against Rashiok. I was beginning to break out into a cold sweat.

That’s because, it’s my fault that his father died. I was the one who killed my father. But the one who was accused of and executed for the crime, was the merchant that had sold my parents the food for the party.

It felt like my heart was about to burst out of my chest. And even though it was cold, I was sweating.

……I had only heard that he was a villainous merchant. Although Kamil hardly ever talked about his father, I could tell from his expression that he still missed him.

If Kamil ever discovers that I’m the true culprit. A chill ran down my spine.

He might have been serving me all this time without looking for any benefits in return.

Urgh…… I couldn’t make a sound, as it felt like I was choking on some sensation. I feel terribly dizzy. My temple was aching in pain.

I somehow managed to lift my trembling fingers, and poked Rashiok’s back three times. Rashiok understood what I wanted and laid down on the floor so I could get on him.

As I somehow managed to endure the feeling of being sick while riding him and not throw up, Rashiok silently brought me back to my room.

Chapter 26: A Rainy Day

"Have Claudia join your domain's army?"

"Yes, rather than always being a freeloading house guest, have her join the army as a way of repaying my favor, and become my bodyguard. What do you think?"

The weather had changed this morning, and right now it's raining heavily. Despite the Kaldia domain being water rich, it doesn't rain that often. As the rain made tapping sounds against the windows of the domain lord's office, Earl Terejia blinked several times at my sudden proposal.

"……Once a little more time had passed and you'd gotten to known each other better, I was going to suggest something like that as well."

"Then I believe, we can send Kamil east for developing the lands there?"

If Claudia becomes my bodyguard, then I can move around Kamil who's been my bodyguard up until now. Moving Kamil at this timing, it's convenient because someone will be needed to take charge of constructing the village for the refugees. With an understanding of cultures other than Arxia's and the ability to get along with others easily, Kamil who should have Earl Terejia's complete trust would be the perfect person to take charge of constructing the village. Since I wouldn't have a personal bodyguard if I send him off somewhere else, I plan to have Claudia take his place.

Earl Terejia nodded repeatedly, and agreed as I expected.

"Claudia-dono's already hanging out at the barracks quite often. For the soldiers as well that had seemed a little down at my birthday celebration, having Claudia officially join them would probably raise their spirits."

There were many soldiers that were deeply impressed with Claudia's prowess with a spear. In the first place, the soldiers in my domain have a bit of an attitude of respecting the strong. That's why there were no complaints about the young Gunther being an officer above the older

veterans.

And since most of them had been former bandits, Gunther included, they have very little resistance against women. There had been many women amongst the bandits, it seems there had been people following some strong women as well in the bandit group where the strong ruled.

If I'm not mistaken, Claudia will definitely be helpful for me controlling my domain's army.

"I want to allow the refugees currently suffering outside Fort Jugfena to be able to become citizens of my domain as soon as possible. I would have no objections to having Claudia become my bodyguard and sending Kamil to be in charge. If it's Kamil, with his skills, he would definitely be able to oversee it successfully."

"Eliza……?"

As I summed up my thoughts on the matter, for some reason the earl suddenly seemed a bit confused. As if to peek into my mind, Earl Terejia's black pupils looked directly into my eyes. I felt as if he could see straight into my heart, and avoided his gaze by looking at the window, while Earl Terejia shut his eyes, and seemed to be thinking about something for a while.

"……Nothing. Mmm, you're right. I'll immediately have a word with Claudia, and instruct Kamil to take charge of constructing the village."

"Very well then. I'll go and call Claudia-dono right now."

I bowed, and exited the office. From behind me, I could hear him saying "you don't look well, you should get some rest after this." I know that more than well about myself. After all, my stomach and head have been aching since this morning, and if I'm not careful I feel like I could throw up at any moment.

Even Claudia was actually staying inside quietly on a day such as this when it's raining so heavily, so I visited the room given to her, and she greeted me back in a voice that seemed to be much lower tension than usual.

Claudia's room had almost no personal possessions in it at all. When she came here, she had basically almost nothing besides the clothes on her back. Since her room is basically the exact opposite of Elise's, it left an impression on me. The iron spear wrapped in cloth leaning against the wall was the only personal possession of Claudia who's currently rolling around on her bed.

"What would you happen to be doing, Claudia-dono?"

"I can't be any more bored than this. Usually it doesn't rain this heavily, but today I'm stuck in the house with absolutely nothing to do."

Claudia was the very personification of having nothing to do, and she was now sitting along the edge of her bed while kicking her feet. She had a totally dissatisfied expression as she complained about her boredom to me, and the way her lips were protruding made her seem like a little kid.

"If you would like, I'll have a maid prepare the items necessary so you can sew."

I couldn't help but tease her a little to get her back for her thick headedness, as I proposed something that would be very ordinary for most girls' hobbies, sewing when it's rainy outside. Although, I'm absolutely sure that Claudia won't be interested in something like that at all.

"……That's, could it be? Did you find out that I hate sewing more than anything else so you're teasing me with such a suggestion?"

"No, of course not."

I figured that she would only reject me without noticing my intent, but I was surprised that it turns out Claudia absolutely hates sewing. I turned slightly red, and was rather shocked inside. Claudia's surprisingly good at reading others. If this had been the normal Claudia that's always hyperactive, not only would she not be able to read the atmosphere, she sometimes might not even notice what other people are saying.

She had stopped kicking her feet, and now, with her lower lip slightly sticking out, just the fact that she's stopped moving really makes her seem like a lady from a good family because of her elegant features.

Usually I can't see her like this..... Somehow, it's actually disappointing that I don't see her like this more often.

"Jokes aside, Earl Terejia would like to talk to you. Could you go to the domain lord's office?"

"Alright, let's go!"

Claudia seemed glad to have the chance to get up and move around, when I told her that she immediately jumped off her bed lightly. I wonder just where exactly that earlier bored appearance of hers went off to. The lady that I had seen earlier must have just been an illusion. She's a girl that has to move, why did I allow myself to get fooled.

And so Claudia briskly left her room, looked right, looked left, then looked right again. What is she doing. It's not like traffic's going to come down this hallway and hit her.

"Erina-dono..... Where's the domain lord's office?"

.....It seems that even in this small mansion, and what's more, in spite of running around every day, it seems that she still doesn't know where the domain lord's office is. Now I'm feeling a little worried about letting this person be my bodyguard. She's so foolish, there's too much to even sigh at. When I think that after sending Kamil away to construct the village that I'll be accompanied by Claudia every day, I felt an indescribable feeling at what I was going to put myself through.

Even Claudia seemed to be a little embarrassed at least, her face was unmistakably turning slightly red. My indescribable feeling doubled in strength.

"My name's not Erina, it's Eliza. I'll take you to the office."

"No, you only have to tell me where it is. Eliza-dono, please rest for a bit in my bed."

"Eh?"

"Your complexion looks terrible. Letting such a child do as she likes when she's in such a bad condition, is against my code of chivalry. Now,

go and rest. When I return, I'll take you to your room."

Claudia smiled widely as she said so and pushed me into her room, and she half closed the door on me, and gallantly went on her way towards the left hallway.

She said and did something cool, but Earl Terejia's office is actually on the hallway to the right. What a no-good girl……

This time, I deeply sighed, resigning myself to the fact that there's probably nothing I can do about her.

At the same time, I laughed a little. Mysteriously, my headache seems to be better than it was as well, that's probably thanks to that no-good girl as well.

As Claudia insisted, I threw myself onto her bed. Even though I had been feeling so terrible all morning, my consciousness easily retreated from me and I fell asleep.

Chapter 27: In Bad Condition

Knock knock, a sound came from the wooden door.

“It’s Kamil.”

At hearing his muffled voice after the knocks, I felt a sick feeling in my stomach. My throat felt painful as if it had just been burned, and I couldn’t muster up a voice to reply. As he opened the door silently as to not make any sound, I reflexively closed my eyes and wrapped myself in my blanket.

After falling asleep in Claudia’s bed, because of my bad condition I had been brought back to my room. I might have strained myself too much and tired myself out. Because I felt sick, I haven’t had anything to eat, and I’ve been sleeping all day.

While Kamil checked to see how I was doing, he slowly approached me. It felt as if my heart was being gripped tightly and suffocating. Even though it wasn’t cold now, with every step that Kamil took, I could feel myself trembling.

“……Charlie?”

Despite my brain ordering my body to pretend to be calm and answer him, my body had stiffened up and I couldn’t even breathe. I could hear my heart beating annoyingly loudly in my ears.

Maybe he’ll think I’m asleep, Kamil touched my cheek with his fingers. Goosebumps ran down my body, and my body flinched without my permission.

“Charlie?”

I desperately kept my eyes closed. I don’t know what kind of expression Kamil is making, but I’m terribly afraid of seeing him. He might even be holding a knife in his other hand right now. There’s no way he’s trying to kill me right now, if he had known about it he would have done something to me the moment he met me, is what my logic was telling me, but even so I couldn’t stop my body from shaking.

Without a doubt, I was afraid of Kamil.

Kamil stroked my cheek with his fingers again. Tension and fear seem to have frozen my body solid, this time I didn't react.

I could hear the sounds of Kamil's slow breathing. Even though he wasn't moving, that alone caused my heart rate to go up. However, even the blood coursing through my body felt like it was freezing over.

"……It's been decided that I'll be heading east to take charge of constructing the village."

Although he was talking, it sounded more like a monotone. He muttered it in a rather low voice.

"The earl-sama said that he can't leave this job up to someone he doesn't trust."

Kamil's fingers that were touching my cheek moved to my forehead. He casually brushed aside my bangs, and traced his fingers across my forehead. I could hear him laughing slightly bitterly.

"In a difficult time, you shouldn't be making that kind of face. Eliza-sama's so stubborn……"

Kamil's fingers departed from my face together with his voice. Eliza-sama, at hearing him call me that I opened my eyes, but I only saw his back as he was leaving. My throat remained frozen until he left.

My heart is now pounding hard for a different reason than earlier.

How long has it been. His voice, calling me Eliza-sama like that, I feel like I've heard him call me that before. Although he should have called me that recently, I can't seem to remember when. I felt a mix of many emotions, but for sure his voice had been reproachful.

Without knowing why, tears starting flowing out, and were dripping down my face from the corners of my eyes. The back of my throat hurt badly.

It took three more days before I was finally able to get out of bed.

My body strength had dropped since I hadn't been maintaining my

body, and the maids prepared simple showers for me with hot water and washbasins. I didn't even have the strength to visit the showers in the barracks.

I used a wrung cloth to wipe my body with, and looked at Rashiok who was waiting beside me although he hadn't come to visit me very much while I had been bedridden. I wiped his forehead as if I were spoiling him, and he laid down for me without me saying anything. Since Rashiok is heavier than a warhorse now, having a six year old ride on him was nothing.

I stopped the maids who were hurriedly getting up. While Rashiok was still laying down and I was by his belly, he scooped me up with his wings.

"I won't say that you're spoiled, but think about our difference in size."

While talking to him and petting his neck, Rashiok made a "guruguru" sound from his throat. His voice seemed more reserved than usual, and I tilted my head in puzzlement.

"Phoebe, what's wrong with Rashiok?"

"Um..... What's wrong, you say?"

I asked the maid who was watching my exchange with Rashiok, but she looked confused and didn't understand my question. I replied to her in exasperation.

"He doesn't seem that energetic."

Normally, Rashiok doesn't act that spoiled when others are around us. And what's more, this time he scooped me up with too much force, this is the first time for him.

"Could it be..... because Kamil isn't here currently? Ojou-sama was also bedridden for a period of time. Rashiok was staying in front of your room the whole time, I think he could be lonely."

".....Kamil, eh. I see, got it."

I accepted the maid's explanation, and slowly closed my eyes. After I received Rashiok from the earl, it's always been Kamil and I that have

taken care of him. Rashiok seemed to understand human power relations to some extent, and obeyed me more than Kamil. Since this is the first time that both of us have been absent at the same time, it can't be helped that Rashiok would feel lonely.

Kamil's not going to be here at the mansion anymore. Rashiok made a lonely sounding cry.

Even though I was the one who drove Kamil out, why is it that inside my chest it's hurting. But, at the same time I definitely felt relieved. The contradiction in my own feelings felt so mysterious and sad.

"You're going to move that child to the barracks?"

"Yes. I'm going to send everyone that's connected to that child to the new village being constructed. I told Gunther that together with Claudia, those two are going to be your future bodyguards and that they'll be in his care."

After I dressed myself properly, the first thing I did was to visit Earl Terejia. Even though there's so much work to be done, because I had collapsed so suddenly I haven't been able to do anything. I also wanted to know what went on during the four days that I was bedridden.

The first thing I heard was the report that "Elise" would be moved to the barracks. Indeed, right now we're also moving out the soldiers to help with the first stages of building the new village. This is probably a great chance to hide the short-haired "Elise" out of sight as well as getting him some basic training.

However, some among the army were probably present at the time when "Elise" had been captured from the village. I wondered how we would deceive them, but the earl simply shrugged.

"He's been kept here at the mansion for quite a while. It'll be difficult for anyone to tell that he's the same person as that malnourished, skinny, grubby child."

"……I see, indeed."

His messy unkempt hair had been cut for him, and Kamil had nominally

carried out his execution. Attaching his hair to the jute bag that was tossed into the river to give the impression that he was executed, none of the soldiers from that incident at Cyril village would be looking for that child.

His appearance has improved since his diet's gotten more nutritious, and since a maid has been washing him every day, even his skin color is different due to all the dirt that had been piled on his skin. Indeed, the change in him is to the extent that he's like an entire different person.

"I explained to him that he's going to receive military training as well, so he should put his spirit into it and work hard."

Earl Terejia said it nicely, but judging by the expression on his face, it's much more probable that rather than putting his spirit into things, it had only gotten him angry as he would resent the earl for how prideful he was.

Because of what happened to his mother, to that child, as the former domain lord's daughter, if he didn't view me the same way as my father who had used his money for personal luxury and to exploit the people, then he wouldn't be able to maintain his spirit anymore. That's why obediently going through the same training I did, and changing his opinion of me is harder than even dying to him.

If he can maintain his murderous hatred for me and return after going through training then that's fine, or if he fails to make it through the training but changes his view of me then that's fine as well.

"It'll probably correct his distorted views on nobles for him."

As Earl Terejia nodded, once again I started thinking about what that would mean.

I first understood it myself when I went to the royal capital, but the only nobles that my domain's soldiers had ever known were my family, who were all rather extreme and crazy people. The soldiers themselves might not be aware of it, but they view me, Earl Terejia, and Claudia differently now from other nobles. They still basically have a hatred for nobility.

……Well, it might turn out to be good for that child. Being around other people that compare me and Earl Terejia favorably to the other “normal” nobles that they know, it might become easier to change that child’s beliefs.

Chapter 28: Magical Beasts

Kamil has left the mansion, and so has that child who was secretly staying in the innermost part of the mansion, but daily life here at the mansion didn't change all that much. Under Earl Terejia's instructions, I would help him and Bellway with their work, and listen to Claudia tell stories about her time with the soldiers, and I would carefully manipulate Claudia so that I could control the army, my days became even busier than before.

And so spring has ended and summer has begun, and phosphorescent moths known as rinkas have become active.

"Hm..... Is that a type of monster?"

"That's right. This year, we've received reports of increased monster activity in the Monster Forest from the Jugfena royal domain. .....Also, it's not just the magical beasts in the Monster Forest. We must also be careful of the monsters from the Amon Nor Mountains."

"Ahh....."

As Earl Terejia informed me about the reports on monster activity, I could only listen incredulously.

Monsters really do exist in this world.

Since I hadn't heard much about them, I doubted whether they really existed, but it does seem that once in a while monsters would attack people or their livestock. It's always been a topic quite distant from me, but come to think of it, Rashiok's species, the draconis, is also a type of magical beast.

I don't know the exact definition of a magical beast. Nor do I really know the specific differences between insects, animals, humans, and monsters in this world. In the bedtime stories that I'd heard from Mrs. Galton before, magical beasts are considered to be monsters that can use magic, but I've never heard of anything like magic or magical beasts in real life here. In fact, I've never even seen Rashiok using any mysterious

powers like being able to breathe fire or control the wind.

However, until I met Rashiok, I'd always thought that draconis were fictional, and I suppose that until this spring, I'd always been a hermit cooped up in my mansion that's never gone anywhere before. Just like magical beasts, magic might really exist as well.

"Come to think of it, I haven't really heard much in detail about the Monster Forest before."

Earl Terejia raised his eyebrow as he looked at me.

"Yes, really. I've always thought it was only a name."

"Didn't Mrs. Galton tell you bedtime stories about monsters and magic every night?"

Earl Terejia seemed to be puzzled as he asked me, but I tilted my head in return. Were bedtime stories really to be believed?

"Yes, I heard them, but I thought they were all made up."

After all, in Mrs. Galton's stories, there were people like sages and paladins, and various paranormal phenomenon that could only be explained by magic. Since as far as I knew, they didn't actually exist, I thought it was fiction. After all, I didn't believe in monsters.

What's more, the new nanny, Mrs. Hortensia, doesn't even tell bedtime stories like Mrs. Galton did. Since I'm still using the common sense from my previous world, it can't be helped that I didn't believe in anything until now.

"I see."

Earl Terejia nodded and made a complicated expression.

"Call Mrs. Marshan over here immediately."

Mrs. Marshan who was brought to the lord's office by Bellway, had some kind of box under her arm.

"I heard that you wanted to see me."

I've been so busy lately, that I've had less time for Mrs. Marshan's

lectures recently. I didn't really think anything of it since Earl Terejia had allowed it, but it's been almost half a month since I last saw Mrs. Marshan, I've been feeling too lazy to study as of late for some reason. I wonder if it's because I remembered just how much I had to study in my previous life.

"Mrs. Marshan, please give Eliza-sama a lecture on magical beasts immediately."

"I understand. Should I take that to mean that it's alright to begin right now?"

"Of course."

Bellway must have already filled her in on the details, after a simple confirmation with the earl, Mrs. Marshan took me back to my room immediately.

But anyways, I wondered just how important magical beasts and the Monster Forest were. For the time being, it still didn't seem very real to me yet, so I didn't know how much importance I should give to magical beasts. The children of other domain lords probably already recognize them as real, as I kept thinking irrelevant things, we finally arrived back at my room. Rashiok who was curled up in a corner of my room raised his head as if to say, what's going on?

"Mrs. Marshan, what's in that box?"

"It's a book, Eliza-sama."

The box was about the size of my jewelry box in the closet, so it seems to be the type of book with its own box case. Looking at the book and its leather bindings after it was removed from its case, it reminded me of a dictionary, and since there's no printing technology in Arxia, such a book must be really expensive.

"All domain lords for domains where there's a possibility of monsters attacking are required to have a copy of this book, but taking into consideration Eliza-sama's age, I have been taking care of this book until now."

I nodded, as Mrs. Marshan immediately opened the book and handed it to me.

“First, I’ll have to teach you about monsters. Monsters are creatures that have powers to cause mysterious phenomenon, which we call magic. Among them, we tend to call the ones that tend to attack people and livestock magical beasts. That’s because most of them resemble beasts.”

“I understand that a draconis would be considered a type of monster, but it wouldn’t be a magical beast?”

I glanced at Rashiok who was lying quietly in the corner of my room as I asked my question, and Mrs. Marshan shook her head.

“You already know that draconis mostly eat snow snakes, and since they have high intelligence and are relatively mild-mannered, they hardly ever attack humans. The only magic they can use is said to be magic that helps them fly.”

I see, I nodded again, and Mrs. Marshan went hmm..... and tilted her head to the side as she was thinking.

“.....Eliza-sama, have you seen a rinka before?”

At Mrs. Marshan’s question, I couldn’t help but think of small moths that would glow in the dark like fireflies, as I told her I hadn’t. The way that fireflies would leave a trail of light behind them was quite a beautiful scene to behold.

“Rinkas are full-fledged magical beasts. They usually gather by the hundreds and burn down trees with fire magic, and even though they’re a type of moth they’re immune to fire.”

Ehh..... a comment involuntarily escaped my lips. That sounds quite dangerous.

“The buildings in the royal capital all have an outer layer of rinka scales. After all, they won’t burn so it’s the best defense against fire. Anyways, they’re not considered that dangerous by themselves, but only in large packs.”

I kept nodding. Mrs. Marshan continued with her explanation.

With Mrs. Marshan teaching me as well as using the records from the book, I learned about monsters, and when this crash course ended it was already time for dinner. Since the maids had brought us tea and snacks during the lesson, we had basically spent the entire day on this.

For now, I'll just sum up what I learned today.

Each type of monster can use different types of magic.

The Monster Forest is so named because only monsters live there with few exceptions. But, monsters actually live almost everywhere.

Monsters have active periods, in which suddenly all of their kind will become active. There are reports that monsters with lower intelligence will behave incomprehensibly.

Although there was also various other things that I learned, those seem to be the most important points. In the domain lord's book on monsters, it mentioned that in case of monster attacks, of course the domain lord and the domain's army would be responsible for defending the land.

Even though it's such a busy time, for monsters to be attacking, this is such an unwelcome event.

Chapter 29: Defending Against Fire Moths

I used four days to learn as much about monsters and countermeasures against them as I could, cramming it in, and Earl Terejia posted notices within the domain about countermeasures to put into practice against the fire moths.

Due to the report that it's now their active period, once it becomes autumn, with the dry season, the fire moths will become even more of a fire hazard. This summer, their numbers are about average, but last winter an unusual thing had occurred. Usually the fire moths disappear during the winter, but it seems that last winter they remained active and still attacked people's villages.

"Mrs. Marshan, there's no mistake that salt water is the most effective thing at exterminating the fire moths?"

"Indeed."

"I would like to see this for myself. Please tell Bellway that I would like to have three fire moths captured for me."

Fire moths, just like regular moths and butterflies, have scales that repel water. And what's more, fire moths seem to be quite water resistant, so only using water would be useless.

However, fire moths seem to be quite weak against salt. I don't understand the exact reason, but I vaguely remember learning in science class during my previous life something about certain insects being weak to salt.

Upon receiving my request, Mrs. Marshan left the room immediately. Normally, I'd be requesting Kamil, but he's not here right now, and for now, even outside of lessons, Mrs. Marshan has taken over his duties. And what's more, she would always follow me everywhere. It was necessary for a domain lord to always have someone by them to carry out their orders, is what Mrs. Marshan was teaching me, and I'm very grateful that Mrs. Marshan is more open-minded and accepting of different ways of thinking.

“Salt, eh……”

To think it would be salt. In Arxia, salt is the cheapest among all seasonings, although it’s still fairly expensive among daily necessities. I intend to see if I can find something to substitute for it. For now, I’ll just think on countermeasures against the fire moths with salt water as the main weapon.

Then, since we know that salt water can defeat the fire moths, we can have salt prepared to help defend the villages.

It isn’t that rare for fire moths to cause fires, but since the trees native to here usually have high moisture content, the main thing to be concerned about are each village’s stockpiles of dried firewood.

As for the forests in my domain, rather than using the soldiers on duty at the area under direct control, I’d prefer if it would be possible for the citizens in my domain to guard them instead. Right now, I’d prefer to avoid adding to the citizens’ sense of fear by sending soldiers.

Fire moths are mainly active during the daytime. Even if it’s their active period, it’s highly unlikely for fire moths to be flying about at night. In my domain, since the moon is usually hidden by the Amon Nor Mountains, it’s quite dark at night. It seems that fire moths don’t have night vision, so they can’t fly around without any moonlight.

However, since the villagers don’t have lights, night comes early for them. They end their day and go to sleep when the sun goes down. It’ll be necessary to organize patrols around the villages each day until it becomes completely dark at midnight, and find volunteers for that.

……Organizing the villagers to protect their own villages, it feels almost like a vigilante corps. In this case, it might be for the best if I seriously try and establish a vigilante patrol.

There’s also the situation with the neighboring country to the east, taking into consideration that Kaldia might be invaded by enemies, this might be a good chance to teach the people some basics of self-defense now. I’d like to make an organization with the villagers that would improve our cooperation and communication.

I finished a basic plan for setting up a vigilante group system, and left my room for the lord's office. When I knocked and entered, Earl Terejia who was working busily just like usual looked at me with a surprised face.

"……It couldn't be, but are you already done with your work?"

"No, I apologize. I'm here to see you because I would like to discuss the domain's military regulations and information on the soldiers."

The domain's military regulations, at hearing this the earl raised his eyebrow. I told him about my plan for setting up a vigilante organization, as he listened with a dubious look on his face, and he pulled some pieces of wood out of his drawer for some reason.

"What's that?"

"It's a rough draft for a self-defense organization. I never would have expected that you could come up with something like this yourself as well."

The earl seemed a little apologetic, and I nodded. This was the first time that I had come up with a plan for the domain entirely on my own. Taking into consideration my age and lack of experience, it's no surprise that the earl also prepared something like this.

Earl Terejia's draft had the same idea as my plan, using conscription into the domain's army to establish a new organization. Apart from that, he also had methods for cooperation between the new forces and the domain's army, as well as setting up methods for faster communication in the villages, which I was still thinking about.

"……Then, we'll try to make this a reality."

"Once you're finished with these, bring them over to me. Also, please submit your countermeasures against the fire moths then as well."

Earl Terejia handed me military regulations and military service records, including of those that had already retired from the domain's army, and I left the office just as Bellway arrived with a small cage containing three fire moths.

“Eliza-sama. I was just about to go find you. I’ve brought three fire moths.”

“Ahh, thanks for your trouble. I’m sorry, but please bring that to the garden for me. Also, could you please prepare half a cup of salt water for me, as well as two cups of regular water. Lastly, please call the gardener Boriswaf for me.”

“Very well.”

I feel like I’ve crossed a point of no return and done something bad. I turned around to look at Bellway’s back as he was leaving, and I got a feeling like I was getting more efficient at using people. Before, Earl Terejia was the one giving orders to everyone in the mansion, but I’m going to have to get used to this from now as well.

I returned to my room at the same time as Mrs. Marshan, and I looked at her arms which were filled with information documents and sighed. Since this was an urgent matter, I didn’t have to say anything.

I placed the documents on top of my desk, and began drafting my plan against the fire moths. Supplying the salt water, and noting the locations where fire moths have been sighted.

If there’s no other methods that can be as effective as salt water against fire moths, we’ll have to supply the salt water. That’s because the villagers don’t have enough salt of their own. What’s more, we might not have enough salt water to go around for everyone. I wonder if I can use poisonous herbs that won’t be enough to kill a human, and mix them into water and have it be effective on fire moths.

While Bellway came to see me while I was writing, he stopped me when I rose my head and spoke to Mrs. Marshan instead. I see, he’s telling her that he’s done with the preparations I requested.

When I finished writing for the time being, Mrs. Marshan probably noticed it and spoke up at that moment.

“Bellway reported that he’s finished preparing the items in the garden you requested.”

“I understand. Let’s go.”

When Mrs. Marshan and I arrived at the garden, Bellway and the gardener Boriswaf were waiting for us. Under the earl’s instruction, Bellway will be remaining here to watch over what I do here.

I told him directly that I intended to experiment on the fire moths to see what could kill them, and I left the more detailed explanation up to Mrs. Marshan. Boriswaf is here to help me carry out the experiment in my place. That’s because it wouldn’t be considered appropriate for me or Mrs. Marshan to be pouring salt water on fire moths and killing them.

“First, I’d like to see for myself the fire moth’s reaction to salt water. Boriswaf.”

At my request, Boriswaf let one fire moth out with a practiced hand. I can see the fire moth quite clearly, and it’s at a close distance for my first time as well, this will make for an excellent observation. A fire moth is about as big as a swallowtail butterfly from my previous life, and its wings were a pale vermillion. With the lighting, it almost looks golden. It really looks like the golden light of fireflies at night, I wonder if that has to do with the pale lighting of the moon as well.

Boriswaf held on to its wings, and dripped a little bit of salt water onto them. As a gardener, he would be experienced in getting rid of insects, so as expected he’s good at handling a fire moth.

The salt water changed the wing’s color from pale vermillion to dark brown, and the fire moth was fluttering frantically. It was clear to see that it was in pain. I don’t know the biology of moths and butterflies too well, but even their wings were probably able to feel pain.

“Alright, let it free.”

I wanted to see if the fire moth would be able to fly with damaged wings, so I ordered Boriswaf to let it go. Although the fire moth was set free, and kept trying to flap its wings, it seems that it wasn’t able to fly.

When I look closer, there are tiny holes in the wings. It’s because of the salt water.

“Butterflies and moths won’t be able to fly if even small holes are drilled into their wings.”

I nodded at Boriswaf’s information. This means that I don’t have to completely cover it in salt water, and now I should see if I can find something to replace salt water, or be even be more efficient.

Chapter 30: First Time Training With Instructor Claudia

Earl Terejia has approved of my plan to deal with the fire moths. Wooden pipes containing salt water would be issued, and a civil militia would be set up.

Since there wasn't enough salt water for everyone, we also distributed wooden pipes with poisons that would work on the fire moths. We also made sure to add sand into the salt water to make sure that the villagers wouldn't try and use the salt water for their personal use. There was also the fact that we discovered fine grains would solidify the moth scales during the experiment in the garden. However, we weren't able to find something that would replicate the effect of salt dissolving the wings and causing holes in them.

Since there were more fire moths than could be taken care of by people, I used the idea of pesticides from my previous life, and instructed the villagers to spray salt water on the fields and near the entrances to the forests, so that the fire moths wouldn't go near the crops. Although I don't remember the details, I do seem to remember that salt can be used as a pesticide in my previous life.

"I've received my first task from the earl! Starting today, you're going to be learning the spear from me, Elida-dono!"

"It's Eliza, Claudia-dono."

I had just finished the plans on dealing with the fire moths, and was working on documents regarding transporting the necessary goods to the villages, when I was ambushed by Claudia, and I was forced to stop working. Well, these documents have to be completed by the day after tomorrow, even though this is something that the earl asked me to do, I don't absolutely have to finish them today. After all, refusals never get through to Claudia. Since it's useless, I've learned not to waste my energy struggling.

“Ahh, my apologies. Then, Eliza-dono, let’s go to the training grounds!”

Claudia grabbed my wrist, and started dragging me around while humming.

“The training grounds? For the soldiers?”

“Yep.”

“I have a different training ground from the soldiers. Since there’s a wide empty space behind the house, I use that.”

Normally Claudia would forcibly use the soldiers’ training grounds and play there, but I don’t go there. After my three months of training concluded, I haven’t been back to the barracks or their training grounds. That’s because I’ve had to either show up in front of the citizens of my domain, or accompany nobles lately. With my own soldiers’ negative feelings towards me, I had to placate them, and get them used to me. I should have cultivated my relationship with the soldiers more, but after leaving the barracks, but considering my position, I haven’t been able to go back to the barracks.

“……I see. I wanted to show you the growth of that child entrusted to me.”

Even Claudia knew at least some common sense as a noble, and she nodded meekly. She doesn’t completely lack common sense, now I know she’s not completely unmanageable. As a house guest that’s entering my domain’s army, we’ve allowed her to freely go in and out of the barracks and use the training grounds there as she liked.

“Ratoka, eh.”

“Yes, Gunther said he’s finally beginning the food gathering for himself this afternoon.”

At the same time that Claudia joined the army, Ratoka was placed as a soldier in training at the barracks, and he’s now going through the exact same basic training that I did. That is, getting beaten up all morning by Gunther, polishing tools and cleaning with the other soldiers in training until noon, and doing an endless amount of marching training after

lunch. After that, he would have to forage for his own dinner by himself.

"I've never hunted before until I came here, but it's really so fun! The food I catch myself tastes amazingly delicious."

Claudia seems to be getting excited over some memories about hunting. I felt a sense of danger, so I gently tried to pry Claudia's hand off my wrist. She didn't budge.

"When I first went up against large beasts with my spear, I realized for the first time that this was indeed different from practice! In order to outmaneuver and defeat enemies with hostile intentions, I must train my intuition!!"

As she shouted and rose her fist to the sky in a display of her determination, Claudia seemed to be sparkling. Probably without realizing it, her other hand was also raising mine to the sky and she was using all her strength to grip me with.

It hurts. Someone, please save me.

"Since that's been decided, Eliza-dono, let's immediately go do some special training behind the mansion!"

I don't know if it's in answer to my wish, but Rashiok who was taking a walk nearby, approached Claudia and gently nudged her back with his front foot.

"Noo, it's an enemy attack!!"

She performed a splendid high roundhouse kick, and I could even hear the sound it made in the air. Although Rashiok was able to duck it, if it had been anyone else from the mansion they probably would have taken a direct hit. Well, since nobody was behind Rashiok, luckily that kick didn't blow anyone's head away.

".....Oh, Rashiok! I'm so sorry!!"

Claudia hurriedly began apologizing to Rashiok, and was breathing hard, and Rashiok met my eyes as if to say, really? This took Claudia about five minutes or so.

Finally, with Rashiok coming along as well, the spear training behind the mansion began.

Claudia had regained her composure on our way here, and with a very calm expression, she began teaching me the advantages and features of the spear.

“Although the sword is basically the main weapon for nobles, in actual battles nobles use spears more often. Do you know why?”

“Since the sword is required for ceremonies and rituals, nobles are taught ceremonial swordsmanship. However, in actual battles, the spear has longer reach, and being a two-handed weapon, the spear is more advantageous than the sword.”

“Yep, that’s it. Now that chain mail is the main type of armor, swords are rather useless. You have to pierce through it. For that, the spear is more suited to the task due to its shape. Of course, the difference in reach is critical in actual combat as well. When attacking from horseback, swords can be blocked even by helmets.”

I felt strange at seeing Claudia actually being serious, and nodded. It seems that there’s going to be a very high possibility of me actually being in battle in the future. Since I’ll be riding, I want longer reach.

“First, you’ll have to remember the feeling of manipulating a rod-shaped weapon. Gunther’s spear practice probably only focused on thrusting the spear.”

For infantry with no knowledge of martial arts, they would only receive training on standing in formation and thrusting the spears for basic training. However, since I’m a commander, Claudia said that I need to truly master the spear and be able to use it for self-defense.

I nodded at Claudia again. Since this has to do with improving my odds of survival, I’m going to take this seriously and learn the best I can.

“Then, start with your form.”

“Yes!”

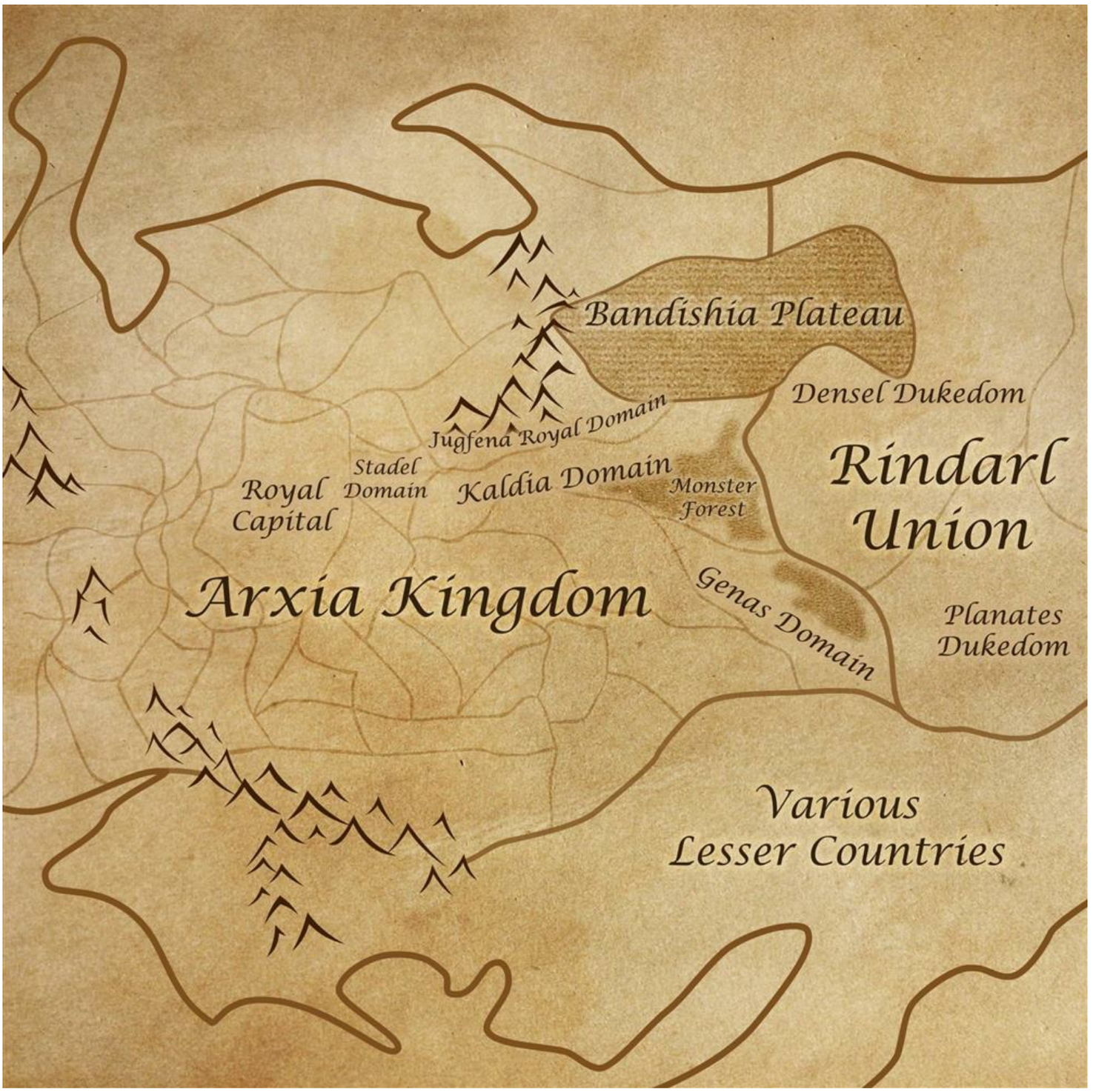
Although I gave a spirited reply, three hours later I was regretting it slightly.

When Claudia said to start with my form, she didn't mean to start with the basic training that Gunther had me do before. The proper form was completely different from what I had been doing up until now, and that one word before training started was the only word I was able to get in, I was almost mentally exhausted to the point of being unable to speak.

With three hours of practice swinging, my training concluded for today.

……I had been slightly excited to learn martial arts seriously for the first time today, but my inner child was fully exhausted, crushed, and thrown away somewhere.

Illustrations



Credits

Translator: Omega Harem Translations

Epub: Estevam / dotNOVEL